

Message Text

SECRET

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44

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6747
INFO USMISSION GENEVA

S E C R E T BANGKOK 0825

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, TH
SUBJ: UNHCR VIEWS ON THE FUNDING OF THE NEW REFUGEE CAMP IN
LOEI

REF: A) STATE 007572 B) GENEVA 0202

1. DCM ACCOMPANIED BY ROSENBLATT CALLED ON UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE BERTA JANUARY 14 FOR A TOUR D'HORIZON ON REFUGEE ISSUES. DCM RAISED MATTER OF UNHCR FUNDING FOR THE NEW REFUGEE CAMP IN LOEI NOTING THAT THE THAI WANTED TO MOVE ALL REFUGEES OUT OF NAM PHONG AND THAT WE ASSUMED UNHCR WOULD PROVIDE THE SAME BENEFITS TO THOSE REFUGEES IN THEIR NEW LOCATIONS AS ARE GIVEN OTHER REFUGEES. DCM SAID MOVE WOULD BE COMPLETED BY MARCH 31 AT THE LATEST.

2. BERTA INDICATED THAT THE UNHCR IS PLANNING TO ASSUME FUNDING FOR THE CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF THE REFUGEES IN LOEI AFTER MARCH 31. HOWEVER, BERTA STRESSED THAT THE UNHCR COULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN ANY WAY WITH THE TRANSFER OF THE REFUGEES TO LOEI AS THIS VIOLATES POLICY OF NOT MOVING REFUGEES CLOSER TO BORDER AREAS. BERTA EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE 12 KILOMETER PROXIMITY OF THE LOEI CAMP TO THE LAO BORDER. DCM EXPLAINED THAT THIS WAS A THAI DECISION. BERTA ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT THE UNHCR WOULD NOT UNDERTAKE TO FUND ANY CONSTRUCTION COSTS. IN OTHER WORDS, THE UNHCR FUNDS WILL BE STRICTLY FOR CARE AND MAINTENANCE

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AT THE SAME LEVEL AS FOR OTHER REFUGEE CAMPS IN THAILAND.

3. ALTHOUGH THE PROXIMITY OF THE LOEI CAMP TO THE BORDER IS THE UNHCR CHIEF CONCERN, BERTA ALSO NOTED THAT CARE AND MAINTENANCE FOR THESE ADDITIONAL 12,000 REFUGEES WOULD STRAIN THE UNHCR BUDGET. THESE REFUGEES HAVE BEEN CARRIED IN THE BUDGET BUT HAVE NOT REPRESENTED ANY REAL COST TO THE UNHCR THUS FAR. BERTA SAID HE HOPED THAT THE HEO WHO HAD IT RELATIVELY GOOD IN NAM PHONG WOULD NOW ADJUST TO MORE AUSTERE CONDITIONS AT LOEI.

4. WE ASSUME THAT THE TERMS OF THE UNHCR TRANSITION AS OUTLINED ABOVE JIBE WITH WASHINGTON AND GENEVA PERSPECTIVES. WE WILL DOUBLECHECK AT THIS END TO MAKE SURE THAT USG FUNDS WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO COVER BOTH TRANSFER AND CONSTRUCTION COSTS.

5. WE HAVE PUT OUT FEELERS TO PAVE THE WAY FOR A FORMAL APPROACH ON THIS MATTER TO THE RTG. WILL REPORT ON THIS SEPARATELY. WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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